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Supplement to:

Subject: Problems Confronting Hong Kong Students/
Student Hostel/New Asia College/Chinese
Students Weekly

Responsive to:

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1. We noted in Hong Kong, as everywhere else we visited in the Far East, an avid interest in learning but the problems of the university student especially among the refugee Chinese, are many. Hong Kong University, government-sponsored and therefore the only institution so recognised, is limited in its enrollment (only about two thousand students, most of whom are quite well-to-do); it can be compared favorably to our residential colleges in the US and its standards are high but it is deplorably inadequate. The rest of Hong Kong's refugee student population attend one of at least nine refugee colleges which are struggling without government recognition and amid real privations, to impart education. The need for books is vast; modern Chinese texts have been destroyed by the Communists and existent copies are difficult to find in Hong Kong, and books from the US are hard to obtain as well as expensive. Most of the colleges issue a certificate of completion in lieu of a degree. There was at the time of our visit (1953) a trend on the part of the Chinese businessman in Hong Kong to accept the certificate, so that the refugee college graduate's future was not jeopardised by his lack of a recognized diploma.
2. Earning enough to support himself is the student's constant difficulty. We met one former Shanghaiite who had been in Hong Kong since 1949. During that time (1949-53) he had staked two friends in college; now that they had finished and had jobs he felt free, at last, to enter college himself. Housing is another difficulty which in refugee-teeming Hong Kong is often insurmountable. An attempt is being made to establish hostels, but so far these are few. We visited one, a large house of flats in one of the better Kowloon districts, where about 75 students from various refugee colleges live, 8 to 10 in a room in bunk beds. Each pays about HK\$75 monthly, which just covers the rent.

Index Copy

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(It would cost about HK\$125 thousand to buy the house.) There is a shower on each floor and a dining-room, kitchen, study-room and small library on the ground floor. There is a man supervisor and students do the maintenance work for which they are paid about HK\$60/90 a month, dependent on the extent of the services which they perform. By general living standards in the Far East, the hostel is comfortable, but this one place is a mere scratch on the surface of the housing problem; the majority of refugee students do not live that comfortably and must find what quarters they can, inevitably crowded and not conducive to study.

3. We visited one institution, the New Asia College which had been in existence about two years (1953). It offers a four-year course in liberal arts; at that time (August 1953) there were about 50 students and more were expected in the fall. It is the only refugee college which teaches Mandarin; Hong Kong University has repeatedly promised to establish a Mandarin department, but the promise had not materialized (1953). New Asia College is housed on the top two floors of a Kowloon tenement, in a few small dark rooms, each of which seats about 20 students. There is no money, but this lack seems of little consequence; somehow they manage to conform to education standards and the morale of both students and teachers is inspiring. Students do the administrative and maintenance work, and about 10 of them live in one of the tenement rooms. There is no library and no space for one. Students pay tuition of HK\$30 monthly when they are able but more often the professors, who are supposed to receive HK\$20 an hour for their work, actually pay the College for the privilege of teaching there. The professors are almost all refugee scholars (e.g. Chen Hu, the historian, is president) and can offer this slim support by their writings. Dr Hu is generous with royalties from his books and in addition, he spends about three hours before each of his lectures, typing copies of the English texts he uses, to distribute among his pupils since books are scarce.
4. The New Asia College students also publish the Chinese Student Weekly, an 8-page illustrated paper which now has a circulation of over 10 thousand throughout Southeast Asia. The paper contains articles and stories written by students (some of the offerings come from the US) and also an illustrated sheet. Students who work on the paper get about HK\$100 a month, which is a comparatively good wage in Hong Kong. The Weekly also prints small books and stories written by students; both contributors and editors exhibit great vigor and spirit. Often a student will work at the paper, attend New Asia College, live at the hostel (if he is lucky) and just about get by - if he doesn't pay tuition. The students are intensely proud of their paper, which, the product of the initiative of so few, has a circulation among so many; they regard it as a tremendous weapon against Communism and are rueful that they cannot get adequate support for it.

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